

Lankford to Leave Congress This Term

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Staff Reporter

Rep. Richard E. Lankford (D-Md.) announced yesterday that he will retire from Congress at the end of the current session, throwing the scramble for his Fifth District seat wide open. The surprise announcement jolted political birdwatchers.

The 49-year-old Annapolis lawyer and former Anne Arundel Delegate to the Maryland House will have completed 10 years in the House of Representatives and 20 years of Government service when he retires.

He is a member of the House Armed Services and Government Operations Committees.

Unexpected Figures

Into the vacuum of his 5th District, already noisy with election year preliminaries, may appear some unexpected personalities.

Before Lankford's announcement, three candidates had filed and two others had declared intentions to run.

William R. Clay, of Hyattsville, a retired claims attorney for the Social Security Administration; Ralph C. Boyd, a Glen Burnie attorney; and Hugh Burgess of Ellicott City, were registered for the May 19 Primary.

Also announcing were Del. Edward T. Conroy, of Bowie, who is giving up his chairmanship of the Prince Georges delegation to Annapolis and Elbert (Bert) Byrd, a University of Maryland political science professor who sought the Democratic Senate nomination in 1962.

The immediate reaction from political observers was that Lankford's retirement might stampede a herd of new entries into the 5th District sweepstakes.

Del. Raymond J. McDonough (D-Prince Georges), who managed Lankford's 1960 campaign, also said he was "extremely interested in the candidacy." McDonough practices law in Oxon Hill.

Rep. Carlton R. Sickles, the Congressman-at-large, who is from Prince Georges County and thus the 5th District, appeared to top the list.

But Sickles had only a laconic reply for reporters:

"I seriously considered running for the 5th District seat when I heard this afternoon that Rep. Lankford would not seek re-election."

Sickles added that his intention still is to run for Congress-at-large again.

Others mentioned yesterday were State Sen. Joseph Alton, of Anne Arundel County, and Sen. H. Winship Wheatley, of Prince Georges County, the State Senate Majority leader.

The first to speak up was Del. Hervey Machen of Hyattsville, only member of the old Prince Georges Democratic establishment of former Rep. Lansdale G. Sasser to win a legislative seat from the County.

Others in Running

Edward J. Klima, County Commissioner from Anne Arundel's largest district, was reported to be "seriously considering" running.

Two other Southern Maryland State senators, Democrats J. Frank Raley of St. Marys and John Thomas Parman of Charles were mentioned by Sickles as likely candidates.

As to Lankford's reasons for retiring there was little explanation other than a desire to quit the tumult.

Sources close to him say he wants to go back to his tobacco farm and attend to business interests in Annapolis.

A native of Wilmington, Lankford served four years in the Navy and six in the Maryland House of Delegates before being elected to Congress in 1954.

He has been re-elected each term, representing a District composed of Anne Arundel, Prince Georges, Howard, Calvert, Charles and St. Marys Counties. With a population of 687,494 it is one of the largest Congressional Districts in the Nation.

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